God is supreme. What a profound realization this is! Its profundity has not been fathomed by those who delve into the depths of reality and reach the minutest points. Those of enlightened minds with eyesight sharp enough to see the rulings of creation and those who wield the compass on the tablet of knowledge have found nothing but the moving breeze and billowing wave that is speech to express the elemental synthesis, the material body, and the exalted essence that cannot fit into the frame of evaluation and is beyond all measure. And why should this not be so? It is impossible to maintain order in the realm of the spirit without its help, and prosperity among the ruins of the physical form cannot be imagined without its assistance. 1

What speech is this which has become apparent? It has thrown off the veil from the eighteen thousand.[1]
There is nothing so drunk as it is in this banquet; there is no one to challenge its supremacy.
It solves all problems in this workshop; it sits in the place of prominence in this court.
The heart says with the tongue and speaks into the ear everything that comes into the minds of people of awareness.
From heart to heart it has a path: the power of speech and the power of hearing are its arena.
In the observatory of the mind the moon of speech rises and sets through the tongue and the ear.

Just as it is impossible to reach speech's exalted rung on the ladder of heaven, so too one cannot enter the invisible desert of its nature on the fleet-footed stallion of the intellect, for it is of a

fiery temperament set upon the wind, of earthly nature that looks like water, its source is the fire temple of the heart, the apogee of its flight is the pleasure park of the air, its market is briskest in water, its resting place is the expanse of the earth, as those who know the various levels of glory, in accordance with their ability to see and comprehend, consider it the commander in chief of the army of intrinsic meaning, or rather the offspring of the heart, and they have called it the chief priest of the temple of mental awareness, or rather the progenitor of the mind—particularly speech that adorns the index of the record of glories, that is, praise of the lord of heaven and earth and laud of the giver who created the soul and the body. It is a source of pride from beginning to end, caravan leader of poets, prince of poetry, lamp of those who dwell in dark huts, an intimate in hermits' cells. It increases the internal pain of those who yearn for the path of seeking God; it rubs balm on the sores of those with internal wounds in the corner of impatience; it is a panacea for those who drink bitter tears of regret; it is plaster for the brokenhearted in the corner of silence. It is the champion of the brave in the fray of love and the toast of flirts at the court of certainty; it gives drink to those whose lips are parched with thirst for comprehension; it increases the pangs in those whose hearts are hungry in the desert of seeking. Thus it is that wise men with aware hearts, with all the tumult of ecstasy and the restlessness of rapture, have withdrawn the hand of contemplation from the skirt of the litter of divinity, with thirsty lips and blistered feet swallowed all their agitation, and placed the seal of silence on their lips. With the help of equity, they have tucked the foot of politeness in the skirt of inability and not begun what destiny has not given them the ability to do.

Letters and dots to express your perfection are sands in the desert. In the world of your knowledge the city of words is a village.
At your door the prefect of zeal gives thought a slap of perplexity in the face and a blow of ignorance on the back of the head.

That is, gratitude to the unqualifiable God is outside the perimeter of possibility, and praise of the Lord is beyond the number of all existing things.

When it comes to recognizing God, for us to contemplate thanks is an act of ingratitude.
See the enormity of inordinate ambition, that a drop would embrace the sea.

Since earthlings have no generic connection to and cannot communicate with celestials, what relationship can there be between the temporal and the atemporal? What then can I, a mere speck of dust, have in common with the world-illuminating sun of holiness? How can one imprisoned by the strictures of possibility and temporality traverse the expanses of necessity and eternity? What can a helpless, spinning mote do in the light of the sun other than adore it? What can a drop of dew do in the face of a churning sea or torrent-raining cloud except claim to have parched lips? If a mote speaks of the one who graces the assembly of existence, even if it does not know that one and cannot say his name, it can speak of and search for him. But what relation is there between the narrow valley of darkness and the vastness of light? What relationship is there between absolute nonexistence and pure

existence? If a creature cannot succeed in knowing the creator so as to speak a few words in praise of his hidden marvels or take a few steps in the wilderness of understanding his secrets, how can it be right for him to enter the realm of praising the creator? For one not admitted to court, to speak of a king's private apartments is to expose oneself to common ridicule.

Although the arm of speech is far reaching, it breaks its head
against the stones of your palace.
Although speech is fat and nourishes the soul, it is too lean to
be served at your table.

You who are higher than the seat of intellects and minds, who are loftier than the field of elements and bodies, since you have not bestowed knowledge of your essence and attributes, it is obvious that you do not deem our gratitude necessary. Since you have rewarded us with limitless bounties, it is evident that you have not made thankfulness obligatory upon our consciences.

Although I saw that the door of speech was closed, I found the 2
gate of action open. Unconsciously I said to myself, "If you do not have the ability to be a poet, and if you cannot race like the wind, grieve not, for this is the practice of glib, empty-handed people who sell words at the expense of meaning, pretending to be brokers. The praise that is considered obligatory on the conscience of the family of possibility by the world-obeyed command of the ruler of wisdom is the praise that turns the night-illuminating gem of wisdom, which is one of the greatest gifts of the planner of all, into a lamp of brightness that sweeps the field of the internal and the external. If the arrangers of the workshop of fate and destiny put one human individual in the garb

of isolation, he can first turn his attention to reforming himself, and then he can endeavor to better others. If, on the other hand, they bring him to the collected realm of worldly attachment and multiplicity, from which there is no escape in the continuum of the order of generation and corruption, if he is a ruler he gives the reform of others priority over reform of himself, just as the reason for a shepherd's existence is to guard his flocks, and the purpose of a ruler is to protect everyone. If, however, he is a subject, he must walk according to the commands of those in authority; only then can he clean the dust of heavy-footed desire and light-headed wrath from the depths of his heart so that by such conduct he can praise the unqualifiable giver and nurturer of the interior and exterior."

When the conversation between myself and my heart reached 3
this point, a way station appeared to my perplexed mind in the far distance. My worry was assuaged a bit. Although my confused mind was distressed by the difficulty and length of the way, it had been gladdened by the thought of arrival, but suddenly my farsighted heart tripped on a stone of worry that the goal of praising God was not to comprehend his perfect qualities and relate them to his court, nor to count the unending bounty of eternity and compare it with our own shoddy goods tainted by temporality in order to realize that the former is higher than human capability and be one of those left behind by the forward-moving camp of gratitude, nor to call one's own pomposity divine praise and be apprehensive of the darkness of the road and the distance of the goal, and, letting deceptive nature consider it as a golden opportunity, fall short of praise and begin that which is falsely made to look like the goal. No, what is meant by praise is to keep this gratitude-loving, self-aggrandizing, arrogant carnal soul on

the threshold of servitude at the level of need and chagrin, and to prevent it from looking upon itself with its own egotistical gaze so that the inner meaning of its helplessness may be given the form of needfulness and so that it may be adorned externally and internally with humility and poverty in order that it may be worthy to reach its goal and praise the giver who created the soul. Since the goods of gratitude are plentiful in the storeroom of humanity—and they are particularly abundant in the emporium of this writer—why should I lag behind in praising the divine or be remiss in thanking the eternal? It would be better for me to escape the clutches of this egotistical one's plots and make myself ready to offer exalted thanks. However, since the goal was so exalted and the search so important, the tongue would not grant the heart permission, and the competent heart was too perplexed to raise its head: neither would innate intelligence allow itself to raise its voice at the forefront of divine praise—as ignorants in the fray of imitation do[2]—and be satisfied with borrowed metaphors and cast-off phrases, nor would gratitude-loving high-mindedness be satisfied to cease searching for him—as small-minded sages do—and close its lips, displaying its inability in a deficient stance, while in practice continuing to do the opposite, and pretending to be truthful and benevolent.

I remained long in this thought, unable to make up my mind whether to speak or to be silent, when suddenly a door of enlightenment was opened into wisdom, from which comes the splendor of existence, and my mind found a glimmer of hope of reaching my goal. A message of awareness reached my ear, saying, "O designer in the studio of intrinsic meaning, why don't you write a book, the preface of which you can devote to praise? You will write the history of the ruler of the earth, the jewel of the crown 4

of monarchs, and praise of God can be included. Praise does not need praise, for the perfect creator's creatures are themselves praise of the giver expressed in a tongueless language, comprehension of which makes those with enlightened minds receptive to absolute light, and it causes one to reach a high level of praising, which is essentially the exalted rank of necessary existence. It is obvious that in the elemental world there is nothing more magnificent or noble than the precious existence of monarchs, on whose high-mindedness the external order of the world depends. It is certain that to entrust a world to one person and to place the affairs of the world in the hands of one individual is to put the world of meaning in him, or rather to create the soul of the world of meaning—particularly a monarch who can detect whiffs of breezes of spiritual spring and grace the throne of success, especially a lord of the age whose heart and mind are watered from an inner spring in both cases, and more especially who has that focus of those aware of God, who has attained a higher rank with divine assistance and has become a painter in the studio of meaning, a host of the banquet of reality, an intimate in the private apartments of the visible world, and a confidant in the pavilion of unity, and who graces the throne of felicity with good fortune. Rule of the material and spiritual and absolute authority over the external and internal are given to him, just as he who graces the royal throne and raises the banner of the shadow of God of our happy time is the quintessence of the designers of understanding and wisdom, the very model of the craftsmen of eternity. With the abundant goods of true praise that you possess, why are you standing perplexed in your search?"

When I heard these encouraging words, the dawn of fortune broke, the foundation of eternal felicity was laid, the eye of hope

became bright, the physical world flourished, the realm of the spiritual rejoiced, the skirt of the goal came to hand, and the countenance of the desired object came into view.

Praise God! What a marvelous mystery this is! In the world's tomes, gratitude to the giver serves as an ornament to books, while here books are made for praise of God, the soul creator. On worldly people's pages praise is voiced subserviently to the purpose, but in this marvelous book the purpose is made subservient to praise. In olden practice, praise of the worshipped one consisted of speech, while in this new court of wisdom, to praise the king consists of action; previously words were resorted to for divine praise, but in this innovative preface refuge is taken in the perfect man, who is the reality-worshipping emperor, the lord of the world who has lifted the veil from external and internal by his act of searching for and finding God. In the sect of the people of isolation and among the worldly, affection has appeared, and the veil has been lifted from form and intrinsic meaning. Heedlessness, which used to tread the path of opposition to awareness, is once again a member of the honor guard; imitation, which emerged from the realm of searching for the truth and used to stir up trouble, has put the cap of realization on its head and become a disciple of this court; blind self-worship, which abandoned worship of God and used to adore creation, has discovered a sighted eye and become humble and servile in the temple of God-worship; weakness-spotting envy, which used to have the wind of melancholy in its head and madness in its brain and vied with the omniscient and omnipotent giver, has taken wisdom as its guide and become one of whose who seek pardon at the court of bestowal and a helper of the hosts of fortune; the pain of search, of which eternal health consists, has ceased being lame 6

and serves as a nimble courier to the goal. And why should it not be so when in this age of increasing knowledge he is a lamp for the dark world, the splendid quintessence of the family of Adam, lifter of the veil from otherworldly mysteries, and portraitist of flawless pictures? How can this be unlikely in the view of farsighted intelligent people when he gives order to regal rituals, distributes sustenance to God's servants, can see the most hair-splitting points, and can assess gems of exchange? So long as the leadership of people of isolation (which is called sainthood) and leadership of the worldly (which is called sovereignty) were separate in the world, inner struggle was rife among human beings. Today, however, by virtue of high-mindedness, prescience, great patience, all-encompassing kindness, appreciation of everyone,[3] and perfect recognition of God, these two lofty ranks, which are the foundations of material and spiritual order, have been bestowed upon this opener of the storehouses of wisdom, this keeper of the keys to divine treasuries. If his sacred existence has this characteristic, of course much that lies hidden in the interior will have come forth onto the stage of manifestation. Do you know by virtue of whose luminous self this worldwide splendor exists? Do you know whose felicitous footfall has brought this luck? It is through the fortune and right of the world emperor of our age, king of kings surrounded by hosts of the renowned, manifestation of divine might, source of infinite generosity, unique at the court of eternity, intimate on the carpet of unity, jewel of the mine of imperialism, bezel in the seal on the divine hand, scion of the Gurkanid dynasty,[4] lamp of the Sahib-Qiran's house,[5] sharer of the secret of unqualifiability, heir to the regal throne, inventor of the principles of world conquest, splendor of the brow of the morn of right guidance, apple of the

eye of the sun of sainthood, ennobler of the seed of Adam, heir apparent to the greater luminary, choice of the totality of fate and destiny, vanguard of the hosts of victory and triumph, kernel of the succession of day and night, cream of the descendants of the elements and celestial bodies, wellspring of the world of generosity and munificence, beauty spot on the cheek of rule and fortune, supporter of the caliphate, delight of justice and clemency, polisher of the gem of luck and fortune, raiser of the level of the throne and crown, assessor of the gem of the wise, appreciator of the essence of the high-minded, he who unties the knot of tangled labors, who rubs balm on the festering wounds of the heart, possessor of heart, enlightened of mind, world-adorning giver of life, soul depicted and intelligence embodied, world of the soul and soul of the world, enlightened theognost, follower of the path to the truth, ever-aware walker on the path of sobriety, ever vigilant on the throne of dawn, only-begotten in the chamber of light, he who increases light in the hidden recesses of the divine presence, who knows the ways of all paths, achiever of universal peace, source of rarest generosity, possessor of the highest stages, confidant to the secrets of whiteness and blackness, manifestation of existential and divine realities, seer of the connections of imprisonment and liberation, knower of psychic and earthly secrets, he who gives drink to those who are thirsty for the limpid waters of union, goal of those who are lost on the road to perfection, manifestation of marvelous knowledge and science, source of divine knowledge and revelatory mysteries, he who gives splendor to the litter that travels in the homeland, lighter of the candle of isolation in a crowd,[6] early to arrive and late to stay, giver of much and taker of little, sentinel of the ship of divine creativity, vessel in the endless, bottomless sea, observer

of the minutest detail in maintaining ranks, hair-splitter in the division of emoluments, of happy disposition and handsome appearance, possessor of a fortunate ascendant star, tolerant and grave, possessor of an exalted aura, wise patron of the wise, hospitable to friend and crusher of enemies, world-adorning seizer of territory, enemy-binding conqueror, mighty forearm of magnificence and splendor, raiser of the banners of glory and fortune, protector of the state and religion, guardian of the throne and signet, designer of the seven climes, pride of the throne and diadem, battle-line-breaking royal rider, lion-overthrowing regal falcon, striver in the field of the Greater Struggle,[7] warrior in the arena of the seven earths, strengthener of the foundations of sovereignty and leadership, layer of the foundations of patronage and punishment, he who holds firmly to the "trusty handle" of perfect reason, he who trusts the "strong rope" of universal justice.[8] In the face of the banquet hall he is all gaze; in the heart of the battlefield he is all courage; in the banquet of conviviality he is an ocean-raining cloud; in the fray of victory he is a blood-thirsty sea; on the field of audacity he is a drawn sword; in the arena of daring he is a polished spear. He is a billowing ocean in the world of generosity, a fire-raining cloud in the April of battle.[9] His breath kindles the brazier of the banquet of the spirit; his kindness fans the dawn of miracles; his justice brings forth sprouts from nature as temperate as Farvardin; his character is brimful with laughter from the breeze of Urdibihisht;[10] the element of his body is a tried and true ascetic in solving enigmas; his sound intellect is a trusted adviser in discovering secrets; his exterior has the splendor of Jamshed and the glory of Fredun;[11] his interior has the wisdom of Socrates and the perspicacity of Plato; he is disciplined externally and

internally; his eye and heart are with the origin of emanation; he has made his heart a confidant of his tongue; he has made unity and multiplicity playmates; his waking hours are spent in guarding his breath;[12] his consciousness keeps its foot on lust and desire; his honesty has closed the shop of duplicity; the touchstone of his knowledge has separated false gold from the real; he has ripped the cloak of forceful domination from the shoulders of tyranny; he has waved the talisman of pardon over the heads of crimes; divine might has caused rays to appear on the forehead of his clemency; the lightning bolt of his kindness has withdrawn the tongue of light from the luminaries of his wrath; his fury has melted the hearts of the recalcitrant; his awesomeness has turned the gall of the audacious to water; with a mere furrow on his brow the heart of the age quails; the joy of time emanates from a ray of his happiness; prayers for his life have taken up residence on the tongues of great and small; a seal of fidelity to him has been placed on the hearts of young and old; the height of his name has rendered low the renowned of the world; the stability of his fortune has unseated leaders of all realms; the fanfare of his fortune has opened the hearts of the rulers of the horizons; the finial of his splendor has caused petty kings to close their eyes to ambition; his exalted renown reverberates in the dome of the firmament; the cry of his glory reaches from shore to shore; his generous bounty surpasses the limits of the six directions; his exalted court is home to the chosen of the seven climes; his daily-increasing fortune is a record of all ages and aeons; his regal ascendant is a preface to the felicity of the stars and the planets.

That king of kings on a level with the sky—the parasol of whose fortune scrapes the heavens—
Adorns the meadow of knowledge and culture; he raises the level of crown and throne.
The throne of his might glitters with fortune; the personification of his luck smiles.
His majesty is the qibla of those who seek the truth; his clemency is a fountain for the thirsty-lipped.
He holds beneath his feet the throne of rule and mat of poverty.
The nine celestial spheres revolve around him; the seven planets travel at his bidding.
He hosts the banquet of the age in sobriety; he guards the world in vigilance.
His affection and vengeance are shown in banquets and on the battlefield; he bestows a brimful goblet from the vat of blood.
Emperors fear his wrath; caesars tremble before a furrow in his brow.
Heavenly in appearance, he is an earth of stability; possessor of universal intelligence, Jalaluddin.
Light of the sun of essence and shadow of God, jewel of the crown and throne, Akbar Shah.
Be this ancient world new through him; may his star shed rays of light like the sun.

This poor one, too empty-handed to offer praise, could neither sit nor stand, but through the felicity of this correct intention and firm determination I suddenly became a treasurer of the storehouses of praise of the creator. What a strange treasurer it is who amasses more by spending his coin and who loses by

accumulating! Through the wealth of loyalty I became an alchemist and enriched my impoverished mind. I loosened my hand in generosity and opened the door to the treasury. I was lucky: I became wealthy. I was a singer of words: I became a reciter of praise. At the threshold of metaphor I opened the door to reality. I was a simpleton: I became a writer of subtlety. The door of my wish, which was closed to me, was opened by divine intervention. Humility was transformed into nobility. What I had left undone was replaced by accomplishment. What I could not say was transformed into utterance. Led from public court into the private hall of audience, I, who had no tongue, was given a poetic tongue and permitted to sing.

7 Before plunging into my purpose—as it was the custom of the ancients of every nation to adorn the first pages of their books, after praising God, with prayers for the holy nobles and lords of divine laws, who, having lit lamps of guidance in the darkness of the world, have sunk into the recesses of nonexistence—whether in general or specifically, I wanted to organize this collection of divine praise in that manner and include prayers, in the manner of expression desired by the heart, for those who, by virtue of their greatness and theognosticism, have a place in the forefront of acceptability to this person; however, since this one who has made his way to the truth via metaphor knows that if a mentally confused person is allowed to recommend generals of battle in the court of rule, and by means of himself wants to make the office of commander in chief of fortune accept the mercy of the ruler of the age, he will be accused of stupidity or madness.

How can a cloud recommend the shining moon to the most luminous sun?
It is a sufficient promotion in station that he describe himself to that majesty as less than a dust mote.

At a court in which the favored great have not been granted permission to make requests, in which they have not been given the power to recommend an ant, how can one left unadmitted at the gate, like me, request mercy for the elite of court? If one like me is silly enough to dare to speak, how shall he be addressed at the just court of discrimination? At the inquisition of equity how shall he be reviled?

Therefore I abandoned that thought and prepared myself to 8
write a record of the material and spiritual emperor, the leader of religion and the world, if divine assistance be granted, and to assemble descriptions of the might and majesty, marvels of war and banquet, noble worship and customs of this divinely chosen one without any hint of the artifice of writers of prose that sounds like poetry, in order that I may discharge my obligations of servitude and devotion to my patron and also that I may ensure that those newly arrived in the visible world and those yet to come in the caravans of existence will be indebted to me. Although every one of these four things is a powerful cause for undertaking this exalted labor, in that the goal was high and my mental ability was short, that fortune could not be attained until it occurred to me that to the extent that I did justice to a creature in this marvelous labor, I would be doing justice to the creator. Although I would be performing an act of devotion and gratitude for patronage, in actuality I would be undertaking praise of God, the creator of the world.

Day after day this determination took shape, and the threads 9
of success were coming together until, from the court of all excellence, an order was given for the patronage of this favored one, Abu'l-Fazl, son of Mubarak, who had placed the cap of utter devotion on the head of his heart and shaken the eighteen thousand worlds from the sleeve of loyalty. "Write the events of our glorious career with the pen of truth," he said. What shall I say? Was this an order to write the past? Or was it permission to record the bestowal of high-mindedness? Or did it confer felicity upon the heart by making it a recorder of glorious events? Or did it award eloquence of speech to an inexpressive tongue? No, no, it gave wings to speech and feet to the pen. It was a messenger from the other world bearing life-giving glad tidings from the world above. It was the greatest honor that was sent down as inspiration from the court of divine power.

Consequently I began to exert myself to the utmost to gather 10
narratives and accounts of the events in His Majesty's life, and I spent a long time questioning members of the court and intimates of this illustrious family—both truthful and alert elders and honest and aware youths—and reducing their accounts to writing. Imperial decrees were dispatched to all parts of the realm, to some whose truthfulness, by virtue of long service, was above suspicion and to others who were questionable, asking them to send to the imperial court copies of their journals and memoirs. Despite the fact that this task had not been totally completed and the desire had not been perfectly fulfilled, a new order was issued for a clean copy to be made from the rough drafts of what had been collected, and for it to be read to the emperor. What would be written later could be added to this book, and details, none of which was too small for inclusion, could also be added

when there was an opportunity. Based on that imperial edict, which is a translation of divine decree, as thoughts emerged from the recesses of my mind, I began to write rough drafts free of rhetorical embellishment. I obtained the register of events from the nineteenth year of the reign, when a decree was issued by H.I.M. for events to be recorded, and from those pages I verified the dates of many events. Much effort was expended to obtain either the originals or copies of most imperial decrees that were issued from the beginning of the reign until the present, and the contents of many of them became the foundation of this history. Much labor also went into collecting the many reports that nobles and officials had written describing events and incidents throughout the realm, and with their verification my mind, which is difficult to please, was put at ease.

I undertook to have the rough drafts and completed manu- 11
scripts of the experienced and intelligent persons of the age collected, and from them I selected a reservoir to make this garden of fortune verdant and well watered. Despite all these items and the wealth of information, since the house of narration has long lain in ruins, and discrepancy, contradiction, and disagreement are rampant in reports, I was not satisfied with them. I therefore asked His Imperial Majesty, who with his perfect memory remembers the details of all events and incidents that took place from the time he was one year old, when his material mind began to work, until today, when with his exalted wisdom he is the qibla of those of mature insight, to verify everything I had heard, and over the course of many sessions I ascertained the truth. I scratched out doubts with the penknife of certainty, and when I experienced an internal confidence, I set my mind to exert itself to carry out the task. It is hoped that, with

the assistance of loyalty, I will complete this service and report the miracles of this sapling of the meadow of existence as I have perceived them, in order that they may be a candle of insight on the road of wisdom for those of sharp sight, and increase the awareness of the enlightened. Praise God! How fortunate am I that I can carry out divine worship in the guise of imperial service by putting together a material and spiritual manual on the protocol of kingship and servitude for all people from monarch to beggar, and making it the basis for my own everlasting fortune.

Inasmuch as I consider it impolite to mention explicitly the 12
name of the emperor of the horizons in this book, which is a record of divine praise, I will refer to him as His Imperial Majesty (H.I.M.). I will mention H.I.M.'s late father abbreviatedly as His Majesty Jahanbani Jannat-Ashyani. I will refer to H.I.M.'s respected mother as Her Highness Maryam-Makani, a title devised by H.I.M. himself. H.I.M.'s grandfather will be referred to abbreviatedly as His Majesty Giti-Sitani Firdaus-Makani.[13]